

The Raiding Dutchmen: Colonial Stereotypes, Identity and Islam in Indonesian B-movies

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This paper intends to examine the portrayal of Dutch colonialism in Indonesian B-movies, which were prevalent in Indonesian screens in the 1970s and the 1980s. The portrayal is full of stereotype, in which the Dutch officials, as the colonial authority, are portrayed as “immoral” and unjust Westerners who have insatiable appetite for financial accumulation. This portrayal is always coupled with the depiction of the films’ arch-protagonists as heroes who fight colonialism, and are equipped with religious justification and self-righteousness that enable them to acquire superhuman strength.

The stereotyping of the Dutch in these films should be seen in relation to two main reasons. First, this modern-day stereotype should be seen in postcolonial discourse as an effort to popularize Indonesian national identity. Secondly, it is not a coincidence that the portrayal of Indonesian heroism in the colonial resistance movements is done in conjunction with national and religious (particularly Islamic) identity since there has been an overlap between national and Islamic identity in the development of postcolonial discourse in Indonesia. In the light of examination of popular narratives in Indonesian B-movies, especially the “colonial actions film genre,” this paper will provide insights into the formation of national identity, religious tension, and postcolonial situation.

Keywords: post-colonial, stereotype, Islam and cinema, b-movies, Indonesia, identity formation

Introduction

Portrayals of colonial experience in Indonesia, especially on how colonialism created an avenue to instigate heroism through popular culture, has never been studied properly amidst the ascendancy of study in Indonesian films and screen culture. Heider (1991), as part of his efforts to seek cinematic convention in Indonesia, shows his awareness of the significant depiction of colonialism in Indonesian cinema and asserts in his book that films are cultural products. Heider categorizes certain films into “*kompeni* genre” or “Dutch’s VOC¹ genre,” regardless of his awareness that it may be too early to call these genres, because the cinematic conventions on portrayals of colonialism in Indonesian cinema are less stable than other genres mentioned in his book. However, his categorization might be useful as a starting point to examine widely-perceived plot structures and characterizations in the portrayal of colonialism in Indonesia.

Heider’s analysis on cinematic convention surrounding colonialism in Indonesian cinema is a mixture of historical periodization and identification

of visual motif. He does not specifically link them to narratives on heroism, the theme that is frequently treated in action films, including Indonesian action films of the 1970s and the 1980s, where the theme of colonialism is frequently portrayed. In light of these films, colonialism is portrayed in relation to a unique stereotypical profiling. The profiling is a combination of a general theme of demonization of the antagonist on one hand and affirmation of national and Islamic identity on the other. By “othering” the colonial and making it as a negative site for identity formation, stereotypical profiling of colonialism in Indonesian action films of the 1970s and the 1980s become important media of identity formation.

Stereotypical profiling of the colonial Dutch in Indonesia has had a long history, which can be found in many types of popular culture products and performances, such as the puppet shadow play (*wayang kulit*), a form of folk entertainment speculated as the precursor of the cinema. The profiling occurred with depiction of colonial rulers as giants or ogre-like creatures with ugly physical attributes to emphasize the demonic quality of the colonial forces that occupied Indonesia. Working in similar logic to the racial profiling and stereotype that are registered by the colonizers of the colonized as noted by Said (1978), these demonic figures are the sites of identity formation, especially related to tag the “other” by emphasizing not only differences, but also derogative qualities of that “other”.

The use of these derogative Dutch colonial figures as “others” is interesting to observe in conjunction with the study of Indonesian action films from the 1970s to the 1980s, especially as related to the formation of identity in Indonesia through popular culture. This happened in Indonesia during the New Order era (1968-1998), where the authoritarian regime led by the late General Soeharto had actively orchestrated ideological conformity for their modernization project (see Sen, 1994 and 2006 for example).

It would be tempting to conclude that this racial profiling, and then typecasting of the Dutch colonial figures, is simply a set of cinematic narrative tools that was used as part of the period drama (or war-drama) film production. This profiling might be observed as a natural portrayal of antagonistic characters when popular action films, with the need to provide a poetic justice, are produced. The demonic portrayal of the antagonistic characters then are deemed necessary, therefore the stereotypical profiling. However, these portrayals are important in the wider spectrum of depiction of religions (especially Islam) in Indonesian cinema, especially by looking at stereotype not as a “fixity” (Bhabha, 1983) that is related to the correctness or “inaccuracy” of description, but rather in relation to its function and effectivity in the cognitive aspect of popular entertainment. Therefore, the details of profiling of the Dutch characters in Indonesian action cinema of

the 1970s and the 1980s will be examined in light of their narrative structures and ideological position, especially vis-à-vis the New Order promotion of the state ideology (*Pancasila*²) on one side and the formation of Islamic identity in Indonesia on the other.

This paper will examine this formation through examination of Indonesian B-movies produced in the 1970s and the 1980s, especially films depicting the Dutch colonialism period. Most film critics in Indonesia do not consider films that are produced to cater to the working class with lowbrow aesthetics in such a way that these play important roles in the formation of identity.³ This view assumes that the discussion of national identity formation is limited to the elite and middle class, and has situated discourse practices as mediated by critics and curators, rather than as an open arena where the construction of identity can be formed through movie-going processes and experiences and not strictly limited to the text or text-reading ability of the audience (Hansen, 1991). This present reading considers a sizable part of Indonesian films, which happen to be produced for “lowbrow” taste, as part of identity formation rather than being ignored regardless of their wide interaction with the audience.



Figure 1. Shadow puppet characters of colonial figures profile a Dutch military officer, Kapten Tack (left), as an ogre-like creature that dresses excessively, while Indonesian hero Surapati (far right) is a smooth-faced Indonesian with sarong in Indonesian traditional clothes (batik) motif. (Image source: Ricklefs, 2004).

Stereotype and colonial discourse

The idea of stereotype was made popular by American journalist, Walter Lippmann, in his book *Public Opinion* that was published in 1922. The book discusses the democratic government in front of incoherence and irrational social perception that function as obstructions to social cohesion, and therefore harmful to the democratic processes. Stereotype, in Lippmann’s assertion, is regarded as a set of tools that work in simplifying complexity in a multicultural society. Stereotype appears based on a preset of “types” that

exist within a certain group in a society that is perceived as the preconceived truth, and this works as a template to examine the reality in societal relations. The “type” works as a mental template in the mind of people that extend into social interactions, especially whenever something “new” or “foreign” come into the bigger picture of society. In Lippmann’s assertion, stereotype works reversely where the pictures in one’s head are perceived as the truth and it works to make reality suit those pictures. The stereotype works both ways, not only as a way to categorize the external party, but also as “self-stereotype” where attachment of certain attributes are carried out within the in-groups. Lippmann asserts that typecasting is inevitable in politics and the formation of public opinion through mechanisms that consciously manufacture the consent of the public in general.

In Lippmann’s assertion, film is the perfect tool in typecasting since its audiovisual nature is suitable to the need of thinking reversely. Word description and speech always need thought processes before the idea comes into mind and work as the typecasting tool, while in the cinema the entire process of picture formation, which consists of observation, portraiture, and reporting, have been prepared and is ready to use. Lippmann pointed out the work of D.W Griffiths, *Birth of a Nation* (1915) as a model in which stereotype and racial profiling perfectly function to cater to people’s imagination of “the other” and then to let the mind and people’s behavior work accordingly (p. 86).

However, the notion of stereotype in Lippmann’s assertion naturalizes the process of typecasting as if it was something natural that happens whenever human beings encounter something new and foreign to them. Moreover, this notion of stereotyping is simplistic in a way that it presumes a fixity of preconception in the human mind that works independently in searching for the truth and making sense of the world.

Rather than seeing stereotypes and processes of typecasting as implementation of the “mental print set” in one’s head into the world as it is perceived, the stereotype should be seen as “a complex, ambivalent and contradictory mode of representation [which is] as anxious as it is assertive ...[which] demands not only that we extend out critical and political objectives but that we change the object of analysis itself” (Bhaba, 1994, p. 70). For Bhaba, stereotype works perfectly well in the colonial discourse as it constructs the process of identification that goes back and forth between what have been already known and something that is anxiously repeated. The ambivalence of the stereotype plays the essential role of stereotype in colonialism as asserted by Bhaba:

“For it is the force of ambivalence that gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalisation; produces that effect of probabilistic truth and predictability which, for the stereotype, must always be in *excess* of what can be empirically proved or logically construed.” (Bhaba, 1983, p. 18)

For Bhaba (1983), stereotype has a hierarchical power and this is made possible by the processes of subjectification through stereotypical discourse. Therefore rather than looking at the identification of stereotypical image in the pursuit of the “truth” (or correctness versus inaccuracy of the stereotypical images), stereotype in colonial discourse should be engaged in relation to “its *effectivity*, with the repertoire of position of power and resistance, domination and dependence that constructs the colonial subject (both colonizers and the colonized)” (p. 19).

Bhaba’s assertion on stereotype is meant to disclose how it operates within the context of colonialism, where through the process of “othering” the colonized becomes a significant part of domination and the ruling process in the colony. In this regard, the colonial discourse becomes an important element in the process of colonialism, especially in producing the colonial subjects on both sides of the relations. Rather than seeing stereotype as a readily made mental picture that exists in one’s head before an unrecognizable situation, Bhaba (1983) examines the stereotype’s efficacy in the process of identification, in creating certain subjects in discourse relations between the colonized and the colonizers. In Bhaba’s words:

My reading of colonial discourse suggests that the point of intervention should shift from the *identification* of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourse. (p. 18)

In the case of Indonesian action films of the 1970s and the 1980s, stereotype works resembling this subjectification process where it becomes a strategy in discourse practices in Indonesia, when the state was promoting its ideology in a massive scale that aimed to produce ideological conformity, something that was considered necessary by the regime in its political and economic modernization. The state’s discourse practice, by promoting a

“master narrative” followed coercion against the dissident (Heryanto, 2007), has resulted in the relative absence of parties that stood against the state.

Islam has been indigenized in the context of the state’s pursuit of ideological conformity. The idea of Islam as the supporter of economic and political modernization became the main tenet that has been promoted and, to some extent, sanctioned by the state in Indonesia. Discourse practices of Islam as the source of political resistance and ideological expression related to the formation of an Islamic state in Indonesia were not allowed in the public, and therefore, ebbed into obscurity in the backdrop of the orchestrated effort to pursue ideological conformity.

Heroism and Indonesian New Order cinema

The orchestrated effort to enforce ideological conformity in Indonesia through cinema during the New Order (1968-1998) was discussed thoroughly by Sen’s (1994). The Indonesian New Order regime was an anti-Communist authoritarian and military regime led by Soeharto, who managed to make himself the president of the country for 32 years before being dethroned by student a movement in 1998. The regime was run with massive propagation of master narrative coupled with state terrorism (Heryanto, 2007), that worked as a pretext for Communist purge in Indonesia in the 1960s and succeeded to maintain stability through the instillation of fear and terror to the citizens. Cinema and other popular media during that regime became an important part of the ideological discourse to guarantee that social and cultural practices conform to the state project and no criticism could be generated against those practices.

The industrial structure of the cinema—production, distribution, and exhibition phases of the films—was effectively controlled by the New Order state through state apparatuses (Sen, 1994). The creative forces and association of film professionals were also tightly controlled and utilized by the state to guarantee ideological and political conformity. Filmmakers must submit their film in many stages (script, rushes, first draft, and pre-screening) to government officials to seek for approval. During these processes, the government would impose changes and revisions whenever they think necessary to make the films suitable to the state ideology. Law and regulations on film put strict limitation to allowable story line, characters, and other narrative elements in the films (including titles). The orchestrated effort was an essential part of discourse construction and social relations in Indonesia, which were mostly based on uncritical reception toward the state’s ideology and modernization programs. This condition was considered necessary for the political and economic transformation of the Indonesian

state and society, from its left-leaning politics under Sukarno to a capitalistic liberal state under Soeharto's New Order.

Implementation of the state ideology during the New Order Indonesia was done by linking ideological discourse with the Indonesians' understanding of their past. This link was made through the "militarization" of Indonesian historiography during the New Order era, which, as asserted by McGregor (2007) was an essential part in understanding the construction of power relations that was carried out in the discourse practices during the New Order era as related to heroism in Indonesian historical films. McGregor pointed out that the discourse practice of portraying militaristic (or militarized) characters in Indonesian history was to promote the idea of Indonesian military as the savior of the nation. This portrayal was important in two accounts. First, this would be the pretext for the predominant supposition of the military in Indonesian politics, which enabled the New Order historian to build image of military characters, especially President Soeharto himself, as the nation's savior and at the same time as an over-arching symbol of heroism and nationalism in Indonesia. Second, this discourse practice, followed by tight control in industrial structure and close monitoring of the film texts, managed to portrayal any alternative ideologies in Indonesia as demonic, deeming them as evil by posing them as traitors to the noble aims of the nation. In many cases, this heroism fell into the sole hand of the New Order leader, President Soeharto, who acted independently by "sacrificing" himself to save the nation from annihilation or colonialism. Films such as *Janur Kuning* (*Yellow Coconut Leaves*, Wiranatakusumah & Surawidjaja, 1979), *Serangan Fajar* (*Attack at the Dawn*, Dwipayana & Noer, 1981) and *Pengkhianatan G30S/PKI* (*The Treachery of 30 September Movement of Indonesian Communist Party*, Dwipayana & Noer, 1982), portray Soeharto and his personal initiatives and created a significant impact on the course of the nation's history.

In light of this discourse practice, heroes in Indonesian cinema were portrayed in stories whose arch-structures consist of three-act structures of order-chaos-order (Sen, 1994). The plotline starts with a peaceful and orderly society (the first order), then the harmony is disturbed when foreign elements enter the film's universe (chaos), and then ends with the re-establishment of order (restored order), that usually involves the figures from formal authority, such as village head (*kepala desa*) or Islamic teachers (*ulama* or *kyai*) or security forces.⁴ It is important to note that in the New Order censorship code, the authorities and certain professions that are considered as "noble" (such as teachers, policemen, and doctors) must not be described as corrupt characters. Such portrayals were considered to potentially corrupt their image in society, and this can also potentially

make Indonesians distrust those figures. This limitation forced Indonesian filmmakers to avoid portrayal of any corrupt figures belonging to formal authorities in general. Exceptions happen to the portrayal of debased parents in familial relationship, in which films with family-driven conflict often put such parents in awkward situation in raising their adolescent children, especially among urban families.

Regardless of the censorship code and its strict implementation in the Indonesian film industry, portrayal of corrupt authorities sometimes occurred in Indonesian action films of the New Order era, but only the ones that set in the colonial era. These “colonial action films” came with the story line that delivered poetic justice, where the villains seemed to be prevailing near the end of the film but then they would be beaten severely by the heroes so the audience would perceive that redemption comes with victory. In order to do this, most films employ one-dimensional black-and-white comparison of the characters, where the villains possess demonic quality while the heroes come with all the good and moralistic characteristics. The oppositional portrayal of heroes versus villains is easily concluded to be the base for stereotypical portrayal of the Dutch in those colonial films. However, this paper will look closely into the function of these stereotypes as the site for the subjectification process in the New Order Indonesia through these action films that were set in the Dutch colonial era.

Colonialism in Indonesian cinema

Before discussing the typecasting of the colonial Dutch in Indonesian cinema, a closer look into the narrative on colonialism in Indonesian cinema can help situate it in a bigger picture. Discussion on colonialism and Indonesian cinema has been done separately by anthropologist Karl Heider (1991) and Indonesian film critic Salim Said (1991). Heider (1991) dedicated a chapter in his book to discuss genres, plots and tale types in Indonesian film, and he mentioned three of the genres are that related to the depiction of colonialism in Indonesia. They are the *kompeni* genre, Japanese period genre, and *perjuangan* (struggle) genre.

The defining factor of each genre is the historical period that correlates each a to particular period in history. *Kompeni* is a shortcut for VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) or the Dutch East India Company, a cartel that dominated the trade in East India in 1602 until its dismissal in 1800. *Kompeni* is the colloquial word used by Indonesians to name the VOC, and Heider adopted this term for his categorization. Referring to this particular historical era, Heider categorized all films portraying colonialism of the VOC in Indonesia as “film *kompeni*”. The Japanese period genre refers to that particular period of history when the Japanese occupied in

Indonesia from 1942 to 1945. The dominant feature of films in this category is the existence of Japanese military occupation army in Indonesia. The *perjuangan* (or struggle) genre refers to the period starting from Indonesian Independence on 17th August 1945 to the international recognition of the independence in 1949, where during the four-year period, many armed conflicts happened between Indonesian's self-proclaimed military force and the Allies-Dutch armies. In this period, the existence of the Indonesian self-proclaimed army (the TNI) or sometimes the militia played important role as the protagonist of the story.

In these three genres, the cast of Dutch as the archetypal antagonist was done in the *kompeni* and *perjuangan* genre. Basic portrayal of the Dutch occurred in both genre in the repeatable villainous characteristics, with variation in the historical setting reflected in the physicals attributes in the film narrative, such as architecture, properties and costume.

Heider (1991) admitted that the classification of *kompeni* is a loose one compared to the other genres he proposed. Based on the depiction of Dutch colonialism from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, Heider proposed an archetype story of a hero (commonly male) who fights against the corrupt Dutch colonial authority and its military power. Most of the films in the *kompeni* genre are a crossover of period war drama and martial art genre, which are variations or sub-genres of the action-adventure genre. The hero is usually depicted to have superhuman power that makes him superior to the Dutch military personnel even when he alone must fight a company of them. Regardless of the Dutch's ability to maintain its colonial rule in many areas in Indonesia for long time, the films depict these heroes to prevail against the colonial power. The defeat of these heroes usually happens due to the betrayal of the heroes' relatives or acquaintances who know exactly the heroes' weaknesses.

Heider included in this genre films, such as *Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk* (*The Warrior*, n.n & Gautama, 1981), *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1970), *Jampang* (Mulyono & Romli, 1989), *Jaka Gledek* (Angriawan & Schadt, 1983), and *Pak Sakerah* (Wijaya & Kadaryono, 1982). Interestingly, Heider also mentioned *November 1828* (Siang, Lolang, Gozali & Teguh Karya, 1978) and *Tjoet Nja Dhien* (Mulyono, Djarot & Djarot, 1986) to be categorized in this genre, while those last two films are considered to be critically acclaimed films and regarded to belong to the 'auteur' category rather than fall into the films that follow the action film genre convention and tale type.

The second genre of colonialism in Heider's (1991) classification of Indonesian cinema is the Japanese genre, which is a minor genre that is sometimes used as vehicle for sex and sadism (p.42). In Heider's description,

the standard plot of this genre involves a woman who is abducted to be sex servant for Japanese soldiers. The focus is on the suffering that must be endured by the Indonesian women while Indonesian men are usually in the background as freedom fighters. There is no portrayal of Dutch colonialism in this genre so they are not included in the discussion of stereotypes in this paper.

The third colonialism classification in Heider's (1991) term is *perjuangan* genre, which, for Heider is, an avenue for historical statement, rather than merely a pursuit of historical accuracy. *Perjuangan* literally means "struggle," which connotes the short period in Indonesian history (1945-1949) where Indonesians have already self-proclaimed their independence but there was no official international recognition of this attempt. World War II had ended and the Allied Force came to the areas formerly occupied by Japanese military power, including Indonesia, intending to reclaim the area but they had to contend with the local armed forces.

The period after the Indonesian Declaration of Independence, where Indonesians fought the Allied Forces (1945-1949), is considered to be an essential period in Indonesian history. The period that is known colloquially in Indonesia as the "physical revolution" (*revolusi fisik*) is regarded by many Indonesian historians as the moment of truth where the Indonesian Independence could be maintained irrespective of the effort to re-colonize Indonesia by the Dutch army that came as part of the Allied power. Portrayal of the events during that period is considered to be the ground for providing mandate for the New Order regime (Heider, 1991, p.43). Films portraying this period, for historian Katherine McGregor (2007), are useful tool for militarization of the Indonesian past, especially by promoting the dominance of militaristic values in defining the Indonesian nationalist movement.

Respected Indonesian film critic Salim Said (1991) explored this particular period of the post-World War II Indonesian situation, in "films of revolution" (*film-film revolusi*). Said mentions three main categories of "film revolusi" based on the intentions of the filmmakers as he perceived them. The first is "campaign on development" (*kampanye pembangunan*), which are films produced in the 1950s aiming to "provide advice" to Indonesians who once participated in the "revolution" against the Dutch. The advice is related to the re-adaptation of the Indonesian "revolutionists" into the society, or to be functional in the society's development after they surrender their weapons and opt out from the regular military force. In Said's words, these films depict the former patriots who "continue their struggle to develop the nation that they have freed" (from Dutch colonialism) (1991, p. 47). Films in this category are:

- *Untuk Sang Merah Putih (For the Red and White)* (n.n. & Said, 1951)
- *Jiwa Pemuda (The Youth Soul)* (Suska & Effendi, 1951)
- *Bakti Bahagia (Happy Devotion)* (n.n. & Said, 1951)
- *Bunga Bangsa (Flowers of the Nation)* (Malik & Ismail, 1951)
- *Sepanjang Malioboro (Along Malioboro Street)* (Malik & Asby, 1951)
- *Embun (Dew)* (Surjosumanto & Djajakusuma, 1951)
- *Selamat Berjuang Masku (Have a Good Fight, My Dear)* (Surabaja & Asby, 1951)
- *Si Pincang (The Crippled One)* (n.n. & Sukardi, 1951)
- *Pulang (Home)* (n.n. & Effendi, 1952)

In short, these films were promoting the former Indonesian militia (or ‘revolutionists’) to rejoin the society and support the development of the nation after gaining the independence.

The second category in Said’s classification is on “men and revolution,” which portray the inner struggle of the film protagonists (who are always men in those films) with the “physical revolution” period as the background. These films focus on the dilemma that are faced by the former “revolutionists” in dealing with the society where they currently live. Included in this category are films such as:

- *Darah dan Doa (The Long March)* (Ismail, 1950)
- *Lewat Djam Malam (Past the Curfew)* (Malik & Ismail, 1954)
- *Debu Revolusi (The Dust of the Revolution)* (n.n. & Sjafei, 1954)
- *Tjorak Dunia (Colors of the World)* (Mo & Siagian, 1956)
- *Pagar Kawat Berduri (The Barbed Wire)* (n.n. & Sani, 1961)
- *Perawan di Sektor Selatan (A Virgin in the South Sector)* (Chatab & Surawidjaja, 1971)
- *Lewat Tengah Malam (Past Midnight)* (Pattimura & Djaya, 1972)

In these films, the inner psychological drama is more prominent as the central theme rather than functionality of individuals in the postwar society.

The third category is what Said calls as “*dokudrama*” (docudrama). Said does not mean this category to be a variant of documentary films where the re-enactment are used to replace the unavailable original footage. He uses this term for fiction films the story lines of which are based on what he calls “historical facts.” These films, according to Said, are intended to preserve the myths that follow the historical events, based on heroic actions that

occurred following the events. These films are mostly produced from the 1970s to the 1980s, during the peak of the New Order era. Films categorized into this type are:

- *Enam Jam di Jogja (Six Hours in Yogyakarta)* (Ismail, 1950)
- *Janur Kuning (Yellow Coconut Leaves)* (Wiranatakusumah & Surawidjaja, 1979)
- *Bandung Lautan Api (Bandung under Fire)* (Rofi'ie & Surawidjaja, 1974)
- *Mereka Kembali (They Return)* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1972)
- *Serangan Fajar (Attack at the Dawn)* (Dwipayana & who?, 1981)

These films portray heroism of certain real characters, but heroism that is mostly based on tales and myth surrounding the roles of these characters in the armed struggle against the Allied Forces and the Dutch in the *revolusi fisik* period.

How the Dutch Are Portrayed

Both Heider (1991) and Said (1991) did not pay particular attention to the portrayal of the Dutch in the categories they mentioned. Heider (1991) pointed out general characteristics of the Dutch as villainous characters, when he discussed alcoholic beverages as one genre convention in Indonesian cinema. Alcoholic beverages come with a moralistic connotation related to the inability to maintain healthy and ethical attitude among the young urban Indonesians and the Dutch colonizers alike. Regardless of production and circulation of alcoholic beverages in Indonesia, the act of drinking alcohol becomes an iconic image that connotes low moralistic values. This will be discussed further below.

Said (1991) also misses the chance to highlight the importance of the Dutch stereotype in his assertion on Indonesian heroes in the crucial *revolusi fisik* context. His deep and insightful observation of the Indonesian protagonists in various situations related to the sense of war, order, and normalcy do not include the portrayal of the other side of the identification, the antagonist side, which is important in producing certain vacillating processes of self-recognition and self-validation of the subject in colonial relations, where knowledge and visual portrayal is created in relation to discourse practices. In this regard, the stereotypical portrayals of the colonial Dutchmen in Indonesian cinema have played an important role as the site for discourse practices, especially in the creation of “the other,” where the portrayal of the self is enabled to reflect back in the vacillating process of subjectification. The position of the Dutch as colonial authority

and “foreign” element in the Indonesian context of heroism narrative has provided certain profiling that is suitable for antagonistic characters. This is specifically understandable in the discourse practice related to Islam in Indonesia, where the robust portrayal of Islam as the source of societal and political transformation is limited. This latest portrayal of Islam as source of progress and social/political reform occurred in the New Order Indonesian cinema (Sasono, 2012), but all are related to the position of Islam as the driving force for modernization that happens in the individual level. This propagation of modernism and Islam happen to the films considered to be “auteur films” with strong allegories rather than the ones with story lines that bring poetic justice into the screen to cater to the popular audience.

The narrative consisting of stereotypical portrayal of the Dutch can be found in some colonial action films across the categorization made by both Heider (1991) and Said (1991), either in *kompeni* genre or the *perjuangan/revolusi* films. The importance of this crossover is the repeatability of the villainous characteristics in the portrayal of the Dutch regardless of different protagonists and variety of story lines. The pattern of Dutch stereotypes that will be discussed below has similarities with the image of the Dutch in the Indonesian shadow puppet show (*wayang kulit*) as mentioned in the beginning of this paper. The evil quality of the villains is represented by iconic ugly physical appearances, exaggerated gestures, and excessive attire, and these are put in the backdrop of resistance to colonialism initiated by Islam-inspired protagonists.

Regardless of variation in the story line, the action films depicting colonial Dutch have similarities in a key scene, which is the depiction of the Dutch raiding a village and then rounding up the male villagers in search for the member (or members) of the resistance movement that they call the “extremist”. The raiding scene (that will be explained in detail below) portrays the power relation between the colonizers and the colonized, emphasizing the ruthless quality of the colonial rulers. In the popular discourse, this scene works to delegitimize the law and order of the colonizer that had been established in the colonial land.

The importance of raiding and rounding up scenes involving the Dutch colonial rulers in Indonesian action films of the New Order quintessentially can be compared to *November 1828* (Siang et.al., 1978), a critically acclaimed film directed by one of the Indonesian leading “auteur” Teguh Karya. The film is purely a period-drama film with very little or almost no action scenes. The film was granted six Citra Awards (including best film, best directing, and best cinematography) and two other major accolades in the 1979 Indonesian Film Festival (the awarding night for the highest achievers in the Indonesian film industry) from thirteen nominations it received. What

is interesting about this film is that the whole story line takes place in scenes of the Dutch raiding and rounding up people in a village to find “criminals”. In “colonial action films,” such scenes are usually of much shorter duration as a build up for the peak of the plotline before the protagonist launches the final attack to the Dutch troops as a retaliation for the Dutch’s cruelty against the people.

The difference in duration implies a major difference in the depiction of the Dutch colonizers in the film. In most of the action films, the Dutch are portrayed sketchily and as one-dimensional characters as part of the stereotypical discourse, while in *November 1828* (Siang et al. 1978), the Dutch, especially the main antagonist Kapitein De Borst (played by Indonesian film superstar Slamet Rahardjo Djarot), who was born as a miscegenation of Indonesian and Dutch couple, is given a considerable amount of time to develop from a one-dimensional character into a person with personal revelation in facing an inner psychological conflict that he must endure. The one-dimensional stereotyping is relatively absent in *November 1828* (Siang et al. 1978), since the film emphasizes the inner conflict of an Indo-Dutch person who must execute the law and order of the colonizer on one side and his attachment to the villagers (he has a kinship with the village leader) on the other.

In the colonial action films discussed in this paper, the raiding and rounding up scenes are the keys to an understanding of the reverse of colonial discourse that are meant to trump the moral legitimation of the colonial law and order, hence, their position as the authorities in front of the people. The detailed discussion on the Dutch stereotype in this paper covers action films such as:

- *Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk (The Warrior*, Samtani & Putra, 1981)
- *Jaka Sembung dan Bajing Ireng (The Warrior and Ninja*, Samtani & Djalil, 1983)
- *Si Buta Lawan Jaka Sembung (The Warrior and The Blind Swordsman*, Samtani & Yacob, 1983)
- *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1970)
- *Banteng Betawi (The Bull of Batavia*, Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1971)
- *Pembalasan Si Pitung [Ji'ih] (The Revenge of Si Pitung [Ji'ih]*, Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1977)
- *Pahlawan Goa Selarong (Selarong Cave Hero*, Sugiri, Widodo & Sudjio, 1970)
- *Pasukan Berani Mati (The Hell Raider*, n.n. & Tantowi, 1983)
- *Jampang* (Mulyono & Romli, 1989)

Comparison of an “auteur film” (such as *November 1828*) and the B movies mentioned above can be clarified in the narrative and artistic elements of both categories. The latter films simplify the plotlines and based the arch-story on “poetic justice,” where the protagonists must suffer some defeats and humiliations before winning the war and the battle. The B movies portray the characters in black-and-white fashion used as platform for the audience’s moral self-identification while in an “auteur film” such as *November 1828*, both the protagonist and the antagonist are given proper time in the plotline to develop as individuals who aspire for one thing and face obstacles in the process of getting them. The production values of the B movies are below standard, emphasizing on the sensational portrayal of the actions, including some gore (especially in *Jaka Sembung* or *The Warrior* series). In the depiction of colonialism, both the “auteur films” and B-movies pay attention to the raiding and round-up scenes, but of totally different purpose. In the drama-driven “auteur films,” the raiding and round-up escalates to the main conflict, while in the B movies, they function as peak of the narrative in bolstering the stereotypical characters.

The stereotypes of the Dutch in these B-movies happen as a part of the portrayal of colonialism in general, rather than merely as portrayal of individual characters with inner problems and psychological development. In this regard, colonialism stands as a backdrop of political structure involving a hierarchical relations among the people (local and the Dutch colonizers) that emphasize the position of the heroes in the sociopolitical context. The colonialism structure in those films is depicted as follows:

1. One Dutch governor or a few top administrators who make political and military decision. The limited numbers of Dutch people to be portrayed in the films might be related to the scarcity of actors of Caucasian appearance ready to be called for shooting. It is not uncommon to see Indonesian actors playing this role with their black hair dyed blonde and speak Indonesian in an accent perceived as influenced by his Dutch origin, sacrificing the make-believe tone of the film for a comedic one.
2. One middle-rank Dutch military officer, usually a captain, who is in charge of the day-to-day ground activities of the colonial rulers. Similar to the top Dutch administrators above, these roles are sometimes played by Indonesians who dye their hair (including facial hair) blonde. This role usually becomes the main antagonist in the story line, therefore it is usually given to famous Indonesian actors [for example, Hamid Arief in *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1970) or Slamet Rahardjo in *November 1828* (Siang, et al. 1978).

3. Local aristocrats who take benefit from Dutch colonialism by being local collaborators or servicemen in the Dutch colonial governance. These aristocrats are commonly portrayed, or implicitly portrayed, as traitors and are willing to “sell” their land and people to the colonizer for their own personal benefit. These “traitors” are depicted to compromise the noble indigenous values for the sake of indulging their colonial masters by tolerating an “immoral” lifestyle or are sometimes even involved in immoral behavior. The intermediary roles of the local aristocrats are sometimes acted out by Indonesians people of Chinese origin. The position of Indonesian Chinese people as intermediary in the colonialist context has given another dimension to stereotyping in the colonial genre, especially in the portrayal of Indonesian Chinese as people who do not possess nationalistic values. The Chinese collaborator is important for two reasons. First, this will complicate the stereotyping for Indonesian Chinese as part of “the other” in Indonesian context, especially through depiction of their opportunistic attitudes. Second, Chinese Indonesians are never depicted as Muslims in these films, posing them as the site for the “local other” based on religious quality, rather than merely physical attributes.
4. Local martial artists who were hired as bounty hunters by the local intermediary to fight and capture the heroes. These martial artists usually possess similar superhuman strength to match the heroes. Sometimes the heroes and these mercenaries come from similar background and belong to the same school or martial arts. The tie-breaker between them is usually the heroes’ religious and moralistic attributes. The heroes are motivated by noble religious values and this has given them stronger force in the final match between the two. The religious attributes play essential role in building the archetypal model of Indonesian heroes that combine national and religious credential at the same time. This model, as will be explained later, will be the key attributes that enable Indonesians to perceive the nationalistic and religious affiliation as something that can simultaneously exist in an Indonesian identity.
5. Dutch (or the local recruits) military troop who work under the captain’s command to maintain the decorum in colonial society. This troop members are typical extras to establish the heroes’ dominance in the armed clash between the two sides. In this discourse, the colonial law and order as represented by the troops are considered to be the false one and therefore they are easily beaten. The law and order in this regard are not aimed to foster the public welfare

and thence, fraudulent. Rather, the heroes' vigilantism is considered to genuinely represent the people's struggle against the despotic rulers and popular support is always behind the heroes' deeds. This popular support becomes an important element in a massive confrontation where the colonial forces raid a village and round up the men to capture the hero as the criminal who bring problems to the law and order.

In this structure, the colonial apparatuses, rather than only the Dutch, are included in the stereotypical discourse to emphasize the demonic nature of the colonial villains in the story line, which enable the poetic justice to be served to the audience to the maximum result. The qualities attached to these bands of villains are combinations of attributes recognizable in xenophobic attitudes and at the same time contain religious and moralistic disqualification based on Islamic standard. The low qualities of the colonizers are described below:

- Infidel

The Dutch are foreigners, assumingly following Christianity, and therefore for a country of predominantly Muslims, they are considered as infidels. The Dutch's religious allegiance has never been shown on the screen, assuming a definite truth is obtained without argument on the disqualification of the religious quality of the colonial rulers. This quality becomes a very important basis for defining the next categories belonging to the same bandwagon as the colonial rulers— the native collaborators.

The local collaborators, especially the martial artists who are hired by the Dutch, through the local rulers, are depicted as low-class mercenaries who are motivated by money or hatred toward the heroes (they are envious of the heroes who are usually better than them in martial arts). These mercenaries then are regarded as people who sell their religious allegiance for money, and therefore they will be beaten – by the will of God (or *Insha Allah* in the heroes' hopeful statement). The position of these mercenaries is epitomized in *Jaka Sembung* (Samtani & Putra, 1981), a film adaptation of a comic book series about a mythical martial artist (*pendekar*) who dedicates his life to fight Dutch colonialism. Jaka Sembung has caused trouble to the Dutch and his superhuman ability has made the Dutch soldiers suffer a lot whenever he attacked them. To deal with this Jaka Sembung issue, some martial artists and bounty hunters are hired by the Dutch, and offer good bounty if they can catch or kill Jaka Sembung. Some of these mercenaries are famous and competent martial artists who potentially can stop or kill Jaka Sembung. This fact bothers Jaka Sembung's entourage and they bring the

story about these mercenaries to Jaka Sembung. Jaka Sembung's response to this very story reflects how the stereotype is extended into the colonialist ruler in one hand rather than they as people. Jaka Sembung's immediate response to the news is a calm and fully controlled remark in Arabic, "*hubbul wathani minal iman*" which means "loving the nation is part of religious belief," which shows how his allegiance to the religion and the country at the same time will grant him enough prowess to enable him to overcome those threats. He then prays for these martial artists hoping that "these apostates" be granted God's forgiveness and mercy for their sins.⁵

The patronizing remark of Jaka Sembung once again shows how the national identity relate closely to religious allegiance and at the same time qualify his fellow countrymen (who are assumingly Muslims like him) as "non-believers" and "non-patriotic" at the same time. In this very discourse, those "other Muslims" therefore can be categorized in the same group as the infidels. The infidels in this regard, the Dutch, are not portrayed as followers of any religion (most likely Christianity) to avoid any disrespectful portrayal of Christianity (religion of more than 10% Indonesians). This infidelity works stronger in two senses. First, to use Islam as the basis for patriotic and religious allegiance with which people of the country with Islam as predominant religion can identify. Second, this infidelity vis-à-vis the heroes' piety is basically part of the assertion of another quality: the immoral nature of the colonialist and the ones associated with them.

- Immoral

Moral in this regard is massively symbolized by alcoholic beverages, which is one of the conventional symbols in Indonesian cinema (Heider, 1991, pp. 59-60). Alcoholic beverages are widely sold, distributed, and advertised in Indonesia, regardless of Indonesia's position as the country with the largest Muslim population. However, in Indonesian cinema, drinking beer or other alcoholic beverages connotes weak or coarse character and this is widely used as part of the depiction of moral degradation. In the context of colonial action films, the action of drinking alcoholic beverages become part of the demonization of the "Western" lifestyle, which degrade Indonesians into dishonor.

The lexicon of alcoholic beverages as the key cinematic apparatus in building tension can be found in *Pahlawan Goa Selarong (Selarong Cave Hero)* (Sugiri, et al., 1970). The film tells the story of the Javanese War (1825-1830) that was triggered when the protagonist, Prince Diponegoro, felt that the Dutch colonialists have influenced the Javanese palace and this turned the aristocrats into the followers of "these Dutch infidels." The key scene showing the moralistic quality of the prince involves a glass of wine. One

of the prince's relatives offers him a glass of wine as a diplomatic gesture to appease him from his apprehensive feeling towards the Dutch. The prince becomes very upset and decides to be more reclusive. Later, when the Dutch put pegs in his land for road construction, his anger becomes unstoppable and he decides to start the armed rebellion against the Dutch in the famous Java War that lasted for five years (1825-1830).⁶



Figure 2. Party and alcoholic beverages sometimes come together to emphasize the degenerate lifestyle of the Westerners. Drinking leads to drunkenness to make the Dutch military officers lose their control, being disrespectful to woman and then involved in a brawl. The photo is captured from *Pasukan Berani Mati (The Hell Raider*; Tantowi, 1983).

- Coarse

The genealogy of the coarseness in Indonesian cinema can be traced back to the portrayal of the giant creature (*buto*) in the shadow puppet show (*wayang kulit*). The giant or the ogre-like creatures in the *wayang* tale are villains who are depicted with physical deformation and speaking with coarse language, while the warriors (*ksatria*) are always portrayed as smooth-faced characters and talk in polite language. This depiction can be seen in many colonial genre films where the Dutch and their collaborators are mostly depicted with untrimmed facial hair and always speak in coarse language to emphasize their impolite behavior.

The impoliteness of the Dutch officers is shown in their interaction with the locals, including the local aristocrats, where they address their interlocutors in laypeople remarks (as opposed to the aristocratic variant of the language that usually become the accepted habit), something that matters a lot in the delicate structure of Indonesian aristocrat hierarchy, especially in Java, which is the setting of most films. These Dutch officers also underestimate problems and are being disrespectful of the local rulers, calling them incompetent while showing no sign of capability in maintaining order and walking the talk.



Figure 3. A representative of Dutch administration addresses their local counterpart belittlingly, sometimes yelling and using laypeople remarks rather than doing it in aristocratic variant of the language. Photo is captured from *Pahlawan Goa Selarong (Selarong Cave Hero)*; Sugiri et.al., 1970).

- **Ruthless**

This quality is related to the Dutch's policy of exterminating the film protagonist that they deem as criminals. The Dutch colonial rulers never see these renegades' resistance as based on political motive, instead they are deemed as criminals who disobey the rule and smear the law and order in the peaceful colonial land. The ruthlessness is shown in a set of activities that consist of raiding a village and rounding up helpless villagers in a small village to find the criminals or people they call "extremists."

The raiding is a key scene in the colonial genre since this is imbued with moralistic quality showing many aspects of structural relations between the rulers and ruled in the colonial land. This happens in a set of scenes as follows:

- a. The member of colonial security force (military or police) raiding a village at daytime (this is perhaps due to logistic issues because the colossal scene can be shot properly and affordably during daylight rather than at night when expensive lighting equipment is needed). The raid was done excessively by deploying few companies of fully armed military soldiers. This is important to set the tone for the unnecessary ruthlessness of the colonial power in ruling the colonial land.
- b. The villagers being herded out from their houses with forces. Ill and elderly people, who are depicted as physically weak, were forcefully evicted from their beds. The women villagers usually cry asking for mercy from the Dutch officers begging them not to drag harshly the sick and the elderly from their beds. This depiction is an important part of the scene to emphasize the inhumane quality of the Dutch security forces, especially against the weak, as compensation for

their powerlessness when they lose the fight with the heroes.

- c. The men in the village bein rounded up in squatting position in the middle of the village while the members of the armed forces surround them with rifles, ready to shoot.
- d. The commander of the security force will interrogating the villagers on the whereabouts of the hero. They use force, such as hitting the villagers with rifle butts, using cane, etc., to force the villagers to speak. It is very rare that this method works. The villagers will not speak out not because they can endure the torture, but because they genuinely have no idea about the hero's resistance. Resistance is most often the hero's individual venture.
- e. Regardless of the torture and the excessive force, the Dutch are never portrayed to do unnecessary killing of the villagers.



Figure 4. Raiding and rounding up of civilian villagers is the key scene in the films of colonial genre. It is done without any proper legal procedure, putting the Dutch above the law, and there is no civil rights of the local in front of the colonial justice system. Photo is captured from *Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk* (Samtani & Putra, 1981).

- Deceitful

Following this ruthlessness, the colonial Dutch are also described as deceitful and willing to do anything to achieve their goals, and this includes defying their own principles and rationality. Regardless of their skepticism against the heroes' superhuman strength (because it defies the law of physics), the Dutch rulers still employ mercenaries with similar power to capture the law and order offender. The Dutch are willing to use any possible means to achieve their goals, from intimidation, slanders blackmail, torture, deceit, and murder. The self-awareness of their evil nature is sometimes displayed, without irony, in their conversation to emphasize the position of the antagonists that is suitable for poetic justice to be served at the end of the film.



Figure 5. Dutch skepticism in supernatural forces is not depicted as based on rationality but arrogance and disrespect to the native tradition. They still employ mercenaries with similar power to capture the hero. Image captured from *Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk* (Samtani & Putra, 1981).

- Greedy

Greed is another important feature that must exist to show two levels of stereotyping. First, greed is the wicked arch-motive of the people of the colonial structure whenever they clash with the heroes and the local people. In the expansive structure of colonialism, greed (symbolized by the voracious gestures toward gold or money) becomes an attribute to any party that is involved in the colonial structure of governance. This depiction of attachment to money becomes a significant moral issue, especially in comparison to the heroes' detachment from money and wealth. In many films, such as *Jaka Sembung* (Samtani & Putra, 1981) and its sequel, *Jaka Sembung dan Bajing Ireng* (*The Warrior and Ninja*, Samtani & Djali, 1983), the key characteristic of Jaka Sembung (and his female sidekick Bajing Ireng) is his (as well as his partner's) philanthropic actions, distributing money that they managed to rob from the "greedy" landlords, to the needy villagers.

Greed also functions to delegitimize the colonial ruling system, especially at how the tax system is being implemented. The colonial tax system, which in many cases follow the existing precolonial tradition, has transformed into a financial machinery in mercantilist capitalism. The Dutch and their tax apparatus seem to have insatiable appetite for financial accumulation and they could not be stopped. In *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (Sugiri, et al., 1970), the Dutch tax officer exclaimed to the police who accompanies him in collecting the tax that they must "take everything" ("*ambil semuanya!*") instead of carefully calculating the amount due to the taxpayer. In *Jaka Sembung* (Samtani & Putra, 1981), the tax officer confiscates the herd belonging to the taxpayer as replacement for a bill that the taxpayer is unable to pay. In an extreme case, inability to pay tax has caused a bigger harassment from the tax officer. In *Jampang* (Mulyono & Romli, 1989), a poor peasant who is unable to pay tax is murdered and his daughter is raped in replacement of the unpayable tax bill.

Interestingly, the black-and-white moralistic portrayal of taxation is juxtaposed with another dimension of racial stereotyping, which target Chinese Indonesians as the exemplary of people with evil nature, accumulating wealth through financial exploitation coupled with force. In *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1970), the intermediary tax officer is an Indonesian Chinese who shows no solidarity with or mercy for “fellow Indonesians” being tortured because of the inability to pay the tax due. Sometimes this intermediary works independently from the Dutch administrator to bail out the tax due and then ask for huge interest as payback. When the taxpayers are unable to pay back the money, this intermediary confiscates their land, downgrading the taxpayer life’s from farmers/landowners into peasants who work the land for fees, thus creating the village proletariat.

Depiction of Heroes for Self-Identification

The heroes in the colonial action films must represent the other side of the stereotype so that the discourse reflects the power relations between the colonizers and the colonized. In this regard, the discourse practice belongs to the “colonized” with their depiction of the protagonist as the site to construct self-identification. The colonizers become “the other” in this discourse as the site where the subjectification may occur.

- **Polite and good mannered**

The daily behavior toward other people becomes the important entry point for the depiction of the intrinsic qualities of the heroes in the colonial action films. They are depicted as polite young men/women who kiss the hands of the elderly, a typical gesture that symbolizes deep respect of ordinary Indonesians toward the elderly. These heroes are always portrayed without facial hair and properly dressed, in contrast to the Dutch who have untrimmed facial hair and who dress excessively.

- **Religious/pious**

The heroes in the films studied are pious Muslims, and this can be seen in their religious attributes, both in their physical attributes and their attitudes/behavior. These Islamic attributes include: reciting the Quran or the prophet’s words (*hadith*) in conversations, doing regular prayers (*sholat*), wearing Islamic headgear (such as *peci*), and other recognizable physical attributes that connote allegiance to Islam. These attributes are important for two reasons: first, to emphasize the self-righteousness in justifying the heroes’ actions in resisting the Dutch and, second, at the same time to enable the depiction of heroes as leaders that receive popular, political, and military

support for their resistance. In *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (Sugiri, et al., 1970), the Islamic attires play an essential role in Prince Diponegoro's resistance against the Dutch colonialists, especially to symbolize the transformation of the prince from a local aristocrat into a war commandant whose support comes mainly from young Muslim and Islamic teachers (*ulama*). When the prince declared war against the Dutch, he did it by wearing a long white gown and turban, dressing like a typical Islamic-scholar in Indonesia, changing from his daily attire of *lurik* clothes that is typically worn by Indonesian laypeople in Java. This transformation is essential for the prince to obtain support from important figures in the society, such as Kyai Modjo, who is a respectable Islamic teacher .



Figure 6. Prince Diponegoro change his attires from the daily motif of "lurik" into a long white gown and turban symbolizing his Islamic credentials. In his right-hand side stands Kyai Modjo, an Islamic teacher who supports him in his resistance against the Dutch. Diponegoro claims that his venture aims to "re-establish the nobility of Islamic values." Photo captured from *Pahlawan Goa Selarong* (Sugiri, et al. 1970).

- **Superhuman**

This superhuman ability is basically an extension of the martial arts skills acquired by the heroes from long-time training. However, in some colonial films, the martial arts ability far exceeds the normal human being capacity and beyond any technical explanation, such as having bulletproof body or even the capacity for shape-shifting. In *Jaka Sembung* (Samtani & Putra, 1981), the local opponents, the mercenaries hired by the Dutch, also have special abilities, such as the power to cast magic spells or a punch so strong that can kill a raging bull in one hit.

These superhuman abilities of the heroes may also come from supernatural sources, one of which is from the ability of the Islamic teachers to turn verses from Quran, or any Islamic prayer, into charms that enable the heroes to acquire extraordinary power. In *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono &

Ismail, 1971), the hero is not hurt by bullets because he is protected by a belt (with Arabic inscription of “*Bismillah*” or “in the name of Allah” written on it) given by his teacher. When he takes the belt off, he is hurt when he is shot with a silver bullet. This is one example of the use of Quran and other Islamic tokens as supernatural sources, which for some other Muslims are believed to be heretical and yet the depiction of these kinds are widely acceptable in films of this genre.



Figure 7. Pitung kisses the ring of his teacher who just equipped him with a blessed machete and a cloth belt with Arabic inscription “*Bismillah*” (In the name of Allah). “Even Satan will be afraid,” says the teacher to Pitung. However Pitung should not part with the belt and he dies if he is shot by a silver bullet. Photo captured from *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1971).

- **People’s hero**

The ruthlessness and greediness of the colonial rulers (and their collaborators) caused the people’s suffering and the heroes are always there to defend them from such cruelty and abusive. These heroes rob the rich, especially landlords who own a lot of properties and farming land, and distribute the booty to the people. They defend the weak from harassment and bullying. They are the people’s heroes. This make the people love them and willing to sacrifice themselves whenever they are needed. These people genuinely believe that the heroes’ resistance is for their interest regardless of the painful harassment process from the colonial forces that they sometimes must endure.

In *Bajing Ireng dan Jaka Sembung (The Warrior and Ninja*, Samtani & Djalil, 1983), the village head cannot endure the frequent harassments from Dutch officers, especially after the heroes steal from the rich. Villagers are tortured to force them to disclose the whereabouts of the heroes. They also cannot enjoy the booty from the heroes because it is considered unusual for the villagers to have so much money without being able to explain the source, and soon the police will find out they just received unexpected money, allegedly from the heroes. Then these villagers are accused as accomplices and the police will arrest and send them to the district head

who will torture them until they disclose the heroes' secret identity. In *The Warrior and Ninja* (Samtani & Djalil, 1983), this vicious cycle of robbery, which includes raiding of the village, exhausts the village leader such that he reveals the true identity of the hero to prevent the village people from further harassment. However, the villagers scoff at his action and accuse him as a traitor instead.



Figure 8. Pitung is a hero in an agrarian society who robs the greedy Chinese landowner and distributes the booty to the needy. In the next scene after the one pictured here, the money given by Pitung is used by this old lady to pay the rent to the same landowner who was just robbed by Pitung. The money is circulated in a closed circuit. Photo is captured from *Si Pitung* (Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1971).

Indonesian Heroes between Islam and the Nation State

How do the archetypes of these heroes help construct national identity in Indonesia, especially in relation to the stereotypical discourse of the Dutch in the context of the New Order's orchestration of ideological conformity? These colonial action films have opened an alternative way of looking at the formation of Indonesian national identity, especially in conjunction with the role of religion as one important element in self-identification and at the same time using the "other" as a contrasting site for that subjectivity.

Regardless of the hostility against Communism in the official discourse of the New Order state, Islam comes into the picture as a source of ethical and moralistic inspiration rather than a source of social transformation or political criticism. To some extent, portrayal of Islam-inspired social transformation is allowed especially in films that promote modernized Islamic teaching and their effort to modernize uneducated Muslims (Sasono, 2012). In this regard, Islam functions similarly as an ethical source of modernization, working on the individual level through education rather than as a source of social movement or political transformation.

The portrayal of Islam as resisting despotic authority is not allowed, and Islam as the source of armed political movement is smeared, as depicted in *Mereka Kembali* (*They Return*, Hadiyuwono & Ismail, 1974), a film produced by Divisi Siliwangi (Army Command Centre for West Java

Province). The film demonized Darul Islam (Islamic State) in a similar tone as the Communists are regarded as traitors of the nation.

In this regard, the discussion of Islam in Indonesian cinema is mostly subdued under the notion of promoting order in relation to the production of ideological conformity and political stability that are necessary for the country's economic development. In this framework, the religious and regional credentials are put under the auspices of the search for national credential (Sen, 2006). In the same light, Ven Heeren (2012) added one element into this structure, which is the existence of the Islamic Scholars (*kyai*) as the *deus ex machina* that restore order after the appearance of supernatural beings that created chaos in the film's universe.

These views have trivialized the role of Islam in the larger spectrum of stereotypes in Indonesian cinema related to identity formation in Indonesia. Depiction of Islam as a source of political resistance in the colonial action films is possible in the context of the New Order ideological control because the heroes are fighting against the colonial Dutch, and the story is based on myths rather than on historical accuracy. This depiction might be more difficult to happen in films whose setting is the current political system. The critically acclaimed historical war-drama *Tjoet Njak Dhien* (Mulyono & Djarot, 1986) approached the edge of this limit by strongly insinuating the Dutch in the film as the autocratic New Order state that despotically ruled the country by spreading terror to the people (Barker, 2012 and Sasono, 2012). It is not coincidence that the director, Eros Djarot,⁷ is known for his strong critical stance against the New Order.

However, the colonial action films have shown that Islam can be a potential source of political resistance, especially by putting the Dutch colonial rulers as a site for subjectification of certain identity. The stereotypical portrayal of the villains (and the heroes at the same time) becomes meaningful in the depiction of Islam as source of resistance as described above, rather than merely providing conformity to the ideological domination. This is very important in relation to the effort to find Islamic heroes that can be the archetype for self-identification for the Indonesian Muslims in the New Order era. As mentioned above, this heroism is easily found in the films that promote modernization and rationalistic quality of Muslims in the context of social and economic progress. However, these action films have added another quality of Indonesian Muslims as contributors to the colonial resistance and defenders of the freedom of the people, inspired by Islam.

This portrayal of Islam gives the political resistance a moralistic quality that is comprehensible to the popular audience and become an important presupposition for people in a predominantly Muslim country. The portrayal of the villains becomes an important point of reference in the process of

subjectification since it provides the religious-inspired moralistic quality for Indonesians rather than merely redemption through poetic justice. The depiction of Islamic credential of political leadership comes together later in 1997 with the film *Fatahillah* (Sudirdja, Tjasmadi, Umam & Tantowi, 1997) as part of the strategy in showcasing an Islamic hero with full credit in the religious and political sense. This could be done only in the late 1990s toward the end of the New Order regime, and they seeking support from Muslims to maintain power. The situation of the 1970s and 1980s has made this effort impossible because of the tight ideological oppression done by the New Order. Therefore, with the need to provide the site for subjectification involving Islam to some extent, this depiction of Islam as source of political resistance is different from the widely perceived role of Islam in the New Order society that limited film production to inspire moral and ethical behavior. Islam could always be perceived by its followers as the source of societal and political change and transformation.

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Notes

[1] VOC or *Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* is a cartel established by Dutch trader in 1602 to undergo their trading in their colony, especially what was called as East India at that period. The VOC is given a mandate by the Dutch authority to establish government and army, if they are considered necessary, to support their venture.

[2] *Pancasila*, which literally means “Five Principles,” is the official state ideology, established in the Indonesian Constitution of 1945 by the founding fathers of Indonesia. The principles of *Pancasila* are relatively loose for any interpretation and during the New Order era, they were employed to put many restrictions to the development of any contrary ideologies (mostly Communism and Islamism). Heryanto (2007) claimed the New Order regime has its “fetish approach” toward *Pancasila* and always refer back to the ideology whenever they need an excuse to repress dissenting citizens. Coupled with stigmatization toward Communism and Islamism, the practices of promoting *Pancasila* and the repression that followed were meant to produce political and economic stability that were believed to be necessary for modernization.

[3] Film critic and lecturer of the film studies department of The Jakarta Art Institute, the oldest film school in Indonesia, Seno Gumira Ajidarma (2014), did not mention even in passing the lowbrow films in his public lecture during the “National Film Day” (Hari Film Nasional) in Jakarta on 30 March 2014, sponsored by the Ministry of Education of Republic of Indonesia. He proposed to include films with “genuine Indonesian root” as a new criterion in defining national identity formation through films.

[4] See Van Heeren (2012) on the exploration of this three-act structure to emphasize the role of Islamic teachers (*kyai*) or any religious leaders as part of the restorer of the order.

[5] It is very interesting that in the international release of *Jaka Sembung Sang Penakluk* (The Warrior), the Islamic remarks made by Jaka Sembung were dubbed into words that are not related to any religion. This transliteration may have been intentionally done to make the story more understandable in the international context. However, seeing it from another angle, it is important to note that those remarks in the Indonesian language are chosen to instigate audience connection to the dominant religion, in this case Islam, rather than just random comment that might still work in the international context. This shows that the Islamic credential of these heroes is an important aspect of the subjectification process in this discourse. I would like to thank Ekky Imanjaya who has exposed me to the internationally distributed version of *Jaka Sembung*.

[6] The importance of the Western lifestyle that comes along the colonialists is also noted in *Babad Diponegoro* (Chronicle of Diponegoro), a book that is written in the nineteenth century to reiterate the myths about the prince. The myths of Diponegoro’s resistance is established in the book, where the prince’s has a manifesto to “rehabilitate Islamic values” amidst the degrading lifestyle of other aristocrats in his palace (Abdullah, 1987).

[7] *Eros Djarot* ran a political tabloid, *Detik* that was closed down by the New Order regime for its critical standpoint. The closure of this tabloid, together with two magazines, *Tempo* and *Editor* on 21st June 1994, stirred underground opposition against the New Order.

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